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WILL DEMOCRACY ALONE MAKE THE WORLD SAFE?¹

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To make the world safe for democracy has come to be the ultimate purpose of the United States in the present war. As the President has stated, "The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment controlled by an irresponsible government." The conviction has gradually widened and deepened among our people that the redressing of the immediate and particular wrongs which forced this country into the war, will not be enough; the fundamental cause of the war must be removed; a peace must be made which will be permanent; "this agony must not be gone through again." It is this resolute purpose which is the basis of the demand in the United States, Great Britain, and France that the governments of the world be made democratic.

In the public mind, however, as revealed by newspapers and magazines, by popular addresses and congressional and parliamentary speeches, it is generally taken for granted that when the nations of the world are once democratic, when all peoples are free in the sense that they control their respective governments, the world will then be safe; great international wars will be at an end; universal militarism will pass away; and the nations will live together in peace and security. But is this impression correct, that democracy alone will make the world safe? If it is correct, then the great aim of America, a lasting peace, a non-militaristic world, will be secured by making all governments democratic, that is, responsible to their people. But if this impression is not correct, then the world may be made democratic without being made safe; the misery and

¹ A paper read at the annual meeting of the American Antiquarian Society, October 17, 1917.

the loss of the war may bring only a partial success, the righting of the immediate wrongs inflicted by Germany and Austria, but not the triumph of our ultimate aim, an abiding world peace.

It is of vital importance to us to know whether this impression is or is not correct. Is it enough to make all nations democratic in the sense in which Great Britain, France, Italy, and the United States are democratic? Will the world at once be safe from wars between civilized states when the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria are made responsible to their people? If not, clearly something more must be done than merely introduce universal parliamentary or responsible government.

If democracies may be trusted to keep the peace this fact should be evident from a study of history. But even a hurried survey shows that, as a matter of fact, democracies have done their fair share of fighting, even of aggressive fighting. In classic Greece, at the height of its development, a large majority of its city states were democracies; yet they were not peaceful. They bled to death from the wounds which they inflicted upon each other. Of all of them the foremost was Athens, which was in many ways peculiarly democratic, since the majority of its public officials were chosen by lot, and its foreign policy determined after full debate by the assembly of all the citizens. Yet the Athenian democracy was continually at war, not merely for defense, but aggressively to gain trade, commerce and territory, and from mere jealousy and pure lust of conquest. It justified its imperialism, as Thucydides tells us, by ultra Prussian logic, referring its subject states who protested against ill-treatment to "the eternal law of nature, that the weak should be coerced by the strong." This democratic imperialism was seen at its height in the attempt to conquer and annex Sicily. The leading city of the island was Syracuse, also a "democracy, tyrannizing over the weaker Greek cities in Sicily, and trying to gain in that island the same arbitrary supremacy which Athens maintained along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean." The project to attack Syracuse was long debated by the Athenian democracy, and

only after full discussion in its Assembly was it finally determined upon. There was no justification for it. Democratic Athens had less excuse for attacking Syracuse than autocratic Austria had for attacking Servia. As one of our recognized historians says of this expedition, "Athens was now staking the flower of her forces, and the accumulated fruits of seventy years of glory, on one bold throw for the dominion of the Western world." Athens lost. Its civilization, probably the most brilliant the world has ever seen, was overthrown by needless wars waged by an aggressive democracy to build up a wide-spread empire in Europe.

The next imperialistic claimant for "the dominion of the western world" was also a democracy, the republic of Rome. After it had won control of Italy, largely by war and high-handed seizures of territory, it challenged Carthage to a life and death struggle for world sea power and empire. The Roman democracy won its aggressive war and then remorselessly determined that "Carthage must be destroyed." It dealt more brutally with its conquered territory than the German army has dealt with Belgium.

After the warring Roman Republic had developed into the Roman Empire the next states which may be regarded as democratic or self-governing are the small city states of northern Italy, which gradually in the eleventh century became little republics. But as they grew independent, "they grew also to be aggressive, quarrelsome and ambitious;" and from the peace of Constance in 1183, which recognized their practical independence, they continually quarrelled and fought with one another. A little further south than these Lombard cities, as they were called, there gradually developed the democratic republic of Florence, the Athens of the late middle ages. By the fourteenth century it had become "a thoroughly democratic and commercial republic;" but this fact did not make it peaceful. It fought its neighbors for commercial advantage whenever it seemed profitable and expedient to do so. Its greatest rival was Pisa; every man in Florence, according to one of the Florentine historians, "determined that he would go naked rather than not conquer Pisa." The aggressive at-

tack was successful and the brilliant period of Pisa came to an end.

The United Netherlands and the English Commonwealth in large measure represented the people; but they were both aggressive in foreign affairs and fought each other bitterly over trade, colonies, and sea power. The Netherlands were also frequently in war with Spain, Portugal, France, and royalist England; and while some of these wars were defensive, others of them were waged aggressively to acquire the great East and West Indian possessions.

Switzerland is endeared to us all for its heroic struggles for independence; but others of its wars were not defensive. In the fifteenth century it was aggressive, and each member of this democratic league made its conquests; "each increased and rounded off its territory." It was by conquest from Milan that Switzerland gained and now holds the Italian-speaking section around Lugano and Locarno; and by conquest from Savoy that it secured most of its French-speaking territory north and east of Lake Geneva.

Revolutionary France, after it had destroyed autocracy and privilege, and had fervently dedicated itself to the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality ought surely to have been a model democracy in its foreign relations. Yet after it was free from the menace of autocratic foreign attack the republic developed a spirit of conquest and contempt for the rights of other peoples, and while still democratic, before Napoleon had secured control of the government, it insisted, in 1794 and 1795, on continuing the existing war against Austria in order to annex Belgium. A little over a century ago then it was a democracy, not an autocracy, which threatened the existence of independent Belgium.

In this long period from Pericles to Napoleon, whenever democracies have appeared, their conduct has given no assurance that if their neighbors had also been democratic, the world would then have been safe. In fact, the history of democracy in these twenty-three centuries shows clearly that a world of democracies of the kind which existed

before the nineteenth century would be a decidedly dangerous world for a peace-loving people to live in.

During the last hundred years, while the number of democratic states has increased, their character has somewhat changed. In the place of the typical city or cantonal republic, there have developed, following the French Revolution, powerful, populous states with responsible or democratic governments. But these democratic nations have been scarcely more peaceful than their predecessors: each of them has been at times aggressive, even imperialistic; each has struggled to expand, especially in the colonial world, and to fulfill its "historic mission" or "manifest destiny;" and at all times each has been quick to defend its national interests and policies. As a natural consequence, since these interests and policies have frequently conflicted with those of other countries, both democracies and autocracies, the result has been a century of wars, ultimatums, and military preparedness.

The most democratic of all European powers, Great Britain, fought the Crimean War in support of its policy to uphold the Turkish Empire; a number of wars against China, notably the Opium War, for the protection and extension of its trade; and the Boer War to consolidate and extend its empire. It also issued a number of practical ultimatums, threatening war if its demands should not be complied with. It began preparations for war against the United States, a sister democracy, in 1862, over the question of sea rights in the Mason and Slidell case; it was ready to fight Russia in 1877 in support of its Balkan policy; it demanded categorically that France should withdraw from the upper Nile, in 1898, when both had occupied Fashoda, in their anxious haste to expand their African possessions. The many clashes between the policies of the British and French democracies led in France to open insults to English residents, and in England to a strong preparedness movement against the danger of a sudden French attack; it was even deemed unsafe to allow a channel tunnel to be dug from Calais to Dover for fear it would be used for a French invasion. The attitude of these two democracies is well

summarized by Prof. Gilbert Murray, of Oxford University, in his recent work on *The Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey*; "we had been on the verge of war with France," he says, "about the partition of Africa, about Fashoda, about Siam, and had serious friction about Egypt, about the Newfoundland fisheries, about Madagascar, and about the new Hebrides." General international rivalry was further embittered by Great Britain's joint partition with Russia, in 1907, of the greater part of independent Persia; and by its occupation of Egypt, a particularly valuable economic and military dependency.

France, in turn, after the inauguration of the Third Republic in 1870, adopted a policy of rapid colonial expansion which involved wars and friction with other powers. It conquered and annexed Madagascar; seized Tunis in 1881, which threw jealous Italy, another democracy, into the temporary embrace of the Central Powers; developed its holdings in Asia, at China's expense, and to the annoyance of Great Britain; joined with Russia and Germany, in 1895, in despoiling China, after they had compelled Japan to relinquish its recently conquered Chinese territory; extended its African possessions in the South East until the Fashoda incident in 1898 and the danger of war with Great Britain forced a retreat, and in the center until Great Britain and Germany temporarily united to check further southward expansion at Lake Chad: and then, adjusting its disputes with Great Britain, secured the latter's support to its seizure of Morocco, the independence of which had been promised by the powers.

Italy, also democratic in the sense of having responsible government, has shown an equal willingness to support its interests and policies by force. It entered the Crimean War to strengthen its position as a European power; and fought a series of wars to drive Austria out of the Italian peninsula. Then it entered upon an aggressive policy of colonial expansion, which began in 1887 by a long struggle against Abyssinia; and was continued in 1911, by an unprovoked attack upon Tripoli. In commenting upon this last act, one of our recognized American historians says: "All

Europe protested against this 'high handed' action by Italy; but Italy replied that she was merely following the example set by other countries." At the present time Italy is demanding not only the Trentino Irredenta, inhabited by Italians, but, for purely military and commercial reasons, a large section of the eastern Adriatic, peopled mostly by Serbs; and is claiming southwestern Asia Minor, occupied by Greeks and Turks, and important Aegean Islands whose inhabitants are entirely Greek.

Even the little Balkan States, in each of which the ministers of the Crown are responsible, at least in part, to the elected national Assembly, show an eagerness to fight for national interests and policies, whether these bring war with autocratic Turkey or with their own Balkan neighbors. Roumania entered the second Balkan war in 1913, and seized and retained a part of the Dobrudja, a section inhabited by Bulgarians, merely to secure a desired increase of territory. It entered into the present war, as is shown by the parliamentary speeches of Ionescu, the leader of the war party, with the object of annexing Transylvania. The people of Bulgaria, as well as the government are passionately eager to win from Servia the remainder of Macedonia; while the people of Servia are equally determined to retain it themselves. The national aims of no Balkan people can be satisfied without conflicting with those of one or more of its neighbors. If all of the Balkan states, including Montenegro and Albania, were to be made thoroughly democratic, but with the present boundaries, and rival claims and policies left precisely as they are at present, no one would dare to claim that this single change would make this region notably safe.

In the United States we pride ourselves, not unreasonably, upon being the least militaristic and the most democratic of all great nations, yet we have always been quick to fight, if necessary, for our national interests and policies; have passed through a period of determined expansion; have waged several wars; and have been ready to fight a number of others, if our demands should not be conceded. Some of these wars and aggravated controversies have been

with nations which had representative governments; the majority of them in fact have been with Great Britain, the foremost European democracy, yet long regarded as our natural and hereditary enemy. While our friendly critics point out that in these international disputes we have sometimes been in the right, and other times in the wrong, yet in every case, when the controversy has become critical, our national administration has been supported by the people.

We fought a "partial war," as our Supreme Court defined it, against revolutionary France, in 1798, over sea rights, and a regular war against England in 1812 over the same general issue; made an aggressive attack for the purpose of conquest, as it is now generally admitted, against Mexico in 1846; and waged war in 1898 against Spain, a democracy in the sense that its government is responsible to the people's representatives.

Our readiness to fight has been repeatedly shown. Our first Democratic President, though a genuine pacifist, sent word to Napoleon Bonaparte, in 1802, that if the French should occupy New Orleans, which they had just secured from Spain by legal treaty, the United States would make an alliance with Great Britain and drive them out; President Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, compelled reluctant Spain, in 1819, to cede the Floridas; President Grant's warlike attitude forced Great Britain, in 1871, to agree to submit the Alabama claims to an international tribunal; President Cleveland, in 1895, threatened Great Britain with war unless it would arbitrate the boundary dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela, and, although probably not one in twenty of our citizens knew that these lands had a common boundary, yet they heartily and evidently unanimously supported the threat of war; and President Roosevelt, in 1903, when he had failed to make a satisfactory canal treaty with Colombia, ordered United States naval vessels to keep Colombian ships and troops from landing near the Isthmus, and, as he has said, "took Panama." We were also, during our most democratic period—from Jackson to Lincoln—firm believers in our national "manifest destiny" to extend both our territory

and our influence—a belief which necessarily brought us into conflict with other nations, even democratic nations. A typical manifestation of this expansionist spirit is the Ostend Manifesto issued in 1854 by the United States ministers to Great Britain, France and Spain, in which they declared—a decidedly Prussian doctrine—that if Spain should not sell Cuba to the United States we should “be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power.” Our desire for expansion in the Caribbean was so marked that for a number of decades Great Britain and France worked to thwart our advance in this region as well as in Central America. Even today the Monroe Doctrine contains seeds of possible trouble with other democracies since it is interpreted by many in this country as giving the United States a right to secure peculiar or artificial advantages in trade and commerce in South America. But Sir H. Johnston, in his *Common Sense in Foreign Policy*, written in 1913, states that it would be worth while for Great Britain to fight even the United States to prevent the success of any such attempt.

During the past century, as is evident from this hasty sketch, the great democracies have been making war, threatening war, and preparing for war, much of the time against each other. Their history shows clearly enough that if their neighbors had also been democratic this change alone would not have prevented wars. Nor is the outlook for the future encouraging. Democratic nations are still willing to fight to defend their national interests and policies; they demand their due share of over-sea trade, concessions and colonies—if they are a commercial or expansionist people—no less insistently because they are democratic. But the interests and policies of one nation conflict with those of another; what one democracy regards as a due share of over-sea trade, concessions, and colonies is an undue share to its rival. Each democracy becomes an excited partisan of its own view, ready to back it by force of arms; and the natural result is, as it always has been, wars and rumors of wars. There are enough conflicts in national policies today to lead to a dozen future conflicts, even if all the world

should be democratic. There is Japan's insistence upon controlling China; our own Monroe Doctrine, when interpreted in a domineering or selfish spirit; England's Persian Gulf policy; the anti-oriental policy of the United States and the British self-governing colonies; the expansionist policy of all of the Balkan states; and the Entente policy, formulated at the Paris Conference, of discriminating against the trade of the Central Powers after the present war shall be over. Unless present conditions are changed, the democratic nations of the world, with their conflicting interests, would find it difficult to maintain world peace, for the next century, even if they wished to maintain it. History, present conditions, and the logic of the situation show that democracy alone will never make the world safe.

In fact, democracy alone—at least our familiar nationalistic democracy, for we need not consider the new socialistic Bolshevism—however much we value it and however fiercely we intend to fight for it, must be admitted to have exerted, at least up to the present time, a relatively small influence in hastening international peace. Whatever advance has been made in limiting the area of war has thus far in history been accomplished almost solely by another means, by uniting existing, independent political units into some larger group, thus bringing peace within continually widening areas. The independent primitive families became tribes; the tribes, city states; and the city states, the Roman Empire. After the fall of Rome, the practically independent feudal castles gradually became feudal duchies; the duchies, kingdoms; and finally the kingdoms, the nations and the empires of today. Each stage has brought peace to the previously warring units after they have once been united in the larger organization.

This process has been working out in a striking way in the recent past. Not a long time ago, as we count time in history, Scotland and England were bitter enemies: Scotland, Celtic and Presbyterian; England, Anglo-Saxon and Episcopal. For centuries their unending border warfare lasted on, until finally without conquest these old enemies were united, and coöperated as parts of the larger British

nation. The states of Germany continually fought one another until they formed a union, which they later cemented by mutual consent into the present German Empire. However fiercely the imperial government may now attack other nations, there is peace between the self-governing states which compose this new federated unit. A similar development took place in Italy. Bitterly and constantly the little Italian city states contended against each other; but they all finally united, in large part by voluntary action, to form the modern kingdom of Italy, and thus brought peace and security to Venice, Florence, Genoa, Milan, and all their warring neighbors within the bounds of the Italian peninsula.

The necessity of some kind of union among independent states, even democratic states, if they are to establish permanent peace, is shown with especial clearness by our own early history. Soon after the coercive hand of the Revolutionary War was relaxed, and our thirteen commonwealths became virtually independent of each other, it took them only a short half dozen years—though they were non-militaristic and intensely democratic—to develop the same kind of disputes and the same spirit of mutual suspicion which we know too well in Europe. New York State ordered its troops to the Vermont border to enforce its boundary claims, while partisans burned houses and murdered farmers in this contested territory. Connecticut showed a genuine war spirit against Pennsylvania because of the inhuman treatment which the Pennsylvania military authorities inflicted upon the Connecticut settlers in the Wyoming Valley. Tariff squabbles of much bitterness arose between New Jersey and Connecticut on the one hand, and New York on the other. Our democracies were rapidly going the way of the military autocracies of the old world; within these few years five of them went dangerously far on the road which led to inter-state war. But they realized their danger, called an inter-state convention and, after a long discussion, adopted the present federal constitution, which the convention had drawn up. It was not their democracy but their federation which saved them.

If the world's democracies are to keep the peace, they too must follow this historic process and form some greater political organization; without entirely relinquishing their sovereignty they must league themselves together to achieve certain common purposes. Such a union or federation of sovereign or partly sovereign states, on a continental scale, is an American conception. Forty years ago John Fiske pointed out that the idea of federation was America's greatest single contribution to civilization, and declared that it was "one of the most important in the history of mankind." Then he added, prophetically, "the principle of federation . . . broadly stated contains within itself the seeds of permanent peace between nations." It is by federation that our own self-governing, partly sovereign, democratic states—differing in size, population, laws, customs, interests, and each with its local pride—succeed in maintaining peace and harmony throughout our continental-wide areas. It is by federation that the British Commonwealths, which are virtually independent, making even their own tariffs, their own immigration laws, and their own tests of citizenship, find security and the means of settling in common, their common problems.

The nations of the world must adopt this same principle. It is not enough that they become democratic; they must also federate into a great league of peace to protect each other from aggression and to provide means for settling international disputes, and agencies for composing clashes of policy and of interest. The necessity of international organization has frequently been pointed out by the President, and at no time more earnestly than in his notable war message, when he held up as one of the aims of the United States the creation "of such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and security to all nations and make the world itself free."

But if the final and essential factor in securing permanent peace is a concert or league of nations, why is it considered necessary to have all of the peoples in the league self-governing or democratic? Chiefly for the reason that a thoroughly militarized autocracy by its very nature can not

loyally enter into a league of democracies which aims to substitute law, reason, and conciliation for military force, and to reduce national armaments to their lowest limits necessary for the fulfillment of the guarantees of the league. It is militarism more than autocracy which prevents cordial coöperation. An autocracy which is not militaristic would not greatly endanger the world's peace; autocratic China, during most of the past century, threatened no country. It is the controlling military caste and the controlling military principle in a great state, whatever its form of government, which stand in the way of membership in a peaceful democratic league. For militarism, necessarily, stands for force and might—the law of the jungle—in foreign relations, and, within its own state, for the supremacy of the military over the civilian element. A state essentially militarized thus represents principles which are directly opposed to those upon which a concert or league of free nations would be built.

This military attitude is well shown by the action of the German government during the past few decades. It has consistently opposed the various suggestions which have been made looking towards international limitation of armament. Before the Hague Congress of 1907, its leaders stated that it would not even send delegates to the Hague, if the subject of the reduction of armament was to be so much as mentioned. It is Germany which has been the greatest obstacle to the Hague idea, as opposed to the "blood and iron" idea. This fact was recognized in the two conferences of 1899 and 1907; and was further illustrated by Germany's attitude towards the calling of a third conference. Dr. Henry Van Dyke has recently shown that all of his efforts as United States minister at the Hague to forward the assembling of a third conference were blocked by Germany. This opposition is only to be expected; a government under military control wishes to rely upon military force—or the fear of it—to back up its policy in dealing with other nations.

But the mass of the people in every great European state, whether its government is under military control or not,

desire peace as a permanent basis of international relations, and do not believe in war as a good in itself or as a policy of calculated aggression. They are, however, ready to fight, if necessary, to defend themselves as well as their national rights, interests, and policies. The majority even of the German people have desired to keep the peace: this is clear from such evidence as the secret report on public opinion in Germany prepared by the French Embassy in Berlin in 1913, and published in the *French Government Yellow Book* in 1914; by the testimony of Baron Beyens, Belgian minister to Berlin for a number of years before the war; and by the observations of Georges Bourdon, the correspondent of the *Paris Figaro*, who made a study of German sentiment in 1913. But the majority of the German people did not control their government. Even had they controlled it to the extent to which the people of Great Britain, France, and Italy control theirs, there would have been likelihood of war had no international machinery been devised for discussing and settling the clashes of policy between Germany and other powers, and thus allaying international suspicion and fear, and obviating the resulting rival military preparedness.

What then must be done to make the world safe? *First*, the German people should obtain control of their imperial government. This change would naturally do away with the insistence, by Germany, of maintaining military force as the sole arbiter in international affairs. *Secondly*, the treaty of peace at the close of the present war should be just; so eminently just to all peoples that the German democracy will be willing to accept it as a somewhat permanent international settlement, and join with the other democracies in safeguarding it. *Thirdly*, a league or concert should be formed of the self-governing peoples, the democracies of the world, in order to maintain international security, justice, and peace.

History proves, however, that democracies—at least nationalistic democracies—unless leagued together, and thus restrained by the ties which bind them to their fellow members will, in the future as in the past, be carried away at

times by the militaristic and imperialistic minorities which exist in some degree in every state, and will become aggressive and unscrupulous; unless they devise methods, with force behind them, for adjusting their conflicting claims, interests and policies, they will occasionally, as has happened so often before, drift helplessly into war, each fighting in defense of what it regards as its just rights.

The fact that democracies bring peace only when they are leagued or federated is of the greatest practical importance to the United States, and should determine our future international policy. The necessity of having the nations of the world become democracies has been emphasized by the President; but the necessity of grouping these democracies into a concert or league to maintain peace, is not so generally appreciated. Yet the President—backed by such men as Ex-President Taft—has for the past two years repeatedly insisted that to obtain secure peace the democracies must form a league of nations, “a concert of free peoples,” “a partnership of democratic nations.”

It is only by supporting the President in his effort to lead our own and the other free peoples—including a freed and self-governing Germany—into a definite concert of states, that we may, in the truest sense, win the war; that we may secure a reasonable promise of obtaining a permanent international peace and of becoming a non-militaristic world. If we should not succeed in forming such a league, no matter how badly our armies may defeat the German troops, no matter how thoroughly we may democratize the German state, we shall fail to achieve fully our great ultimate purpose in the war. For democracy alone will never make the world safe.